KITKAT GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE

ZHONGSHAN ROAD, INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT

SHANGHAI, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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"What can I say, sometimes things just happen that way! No sense in making plans or holding on to what is already lost."
- Lord Mountbatten, 1948

A casual observer might find it worthwhile to reflect on Lord Mountbatten's well-known saying, particularly in light of the unique path that Claudie, Seine, and I have navigated since we made the pivotal choice to forge a separate peace with the Germans during the First

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Industrial Slaughter, often referred to by those who were not present as the Great War or World War I.
Our decision stemmed from a shared understanding and a deep-seated desire to avoid the tragic fate of becoming casualties in a conflict that ignited from a mere insult exchanged between the King of England and his cousin, the German Kaiser.
As a result of this choice, we

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have spent our lives on the fringes of contemporary society, grappling with the complexities and challenges that arise from living in a world shaped by the aftermath of such a monumental event.

For those familiar with our travels, this isn't our first venture into the vibrant city of Shanghai. Many will recall the illustrious KitKat Gentlemen's Lounge, which served as our makeshift headquarters during the early 1930s.

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At that time, we found ourselves in a precarious situation, waiting for Seine to finalize our travel documents from the Great Imperial Nippon Army, which had established its presence across much of China.

This period was marked by uncertainty as we navigated the complexities of an occupied land, all while anticipating a promising job opportunity that awaited us in Nanking.

The KitKat, with its unique

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atmosphere and eclectic clientele, provided a temporary refuge as we plotted our next steps in a city teeming with both challenges and possibilities.

I vividly remember the sensation of existing in a world filled with expatriates, a society that was steeped in corruption and already on the brink of collapse, yet collectively chose to ignore the reality of its demise.

It was as if we were all participants in a grand illusion,

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desperately clinging to the remnants of the roaring 1920s, a time that had long since passed. People have a peculiar tendency to retreat into nostalgia when faced with adversity; rather than confronting the harsh truths of their circumstances, they often find solace in the familiar echoes of a bygone era.

This instinct to hold onto the past, even when logic suggests it would be wiser to let go and adapt, reveals a profound aspect

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of human nature—our reluctance to accept change, even when it is desperately needed.

In that tumultuous period, the majority of the International Section made a resolute decision to stand firm rather than retreat, enthusiastically committing themselves to a foreign cause that would ultimately lead to their downfall.

They chose this distant battlefield as their symbolic hill to fight and, in their fervor, seemed oblivious

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to the impending tide of history that would soon wash over them. As events unfolded, they were swept away, their efforts rendered futile, and they faded into obscurity, becoming little more than a footnote in the annals of time.

Among those who remained until the Japanese forces advanced, most were never heard from again, their stories lost to the ages, leaving behind a haunting silence where once there was

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fervent idealism.
It's time to step away from my tirade on human folly and reflect on our current situation, which feels reminiscent of Shanghai in 1949.
Here we are, enjoying an extravagant round of drinks, courtesy of our generous benefactor who orchestrated and funded this entire escapade.
This individual, a prominent figure within the Kuomintang Party, found himself at odds with

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both Chiang Kai-shek and the communists, particularly due to his controversial choice to align with the Japanese during the late 1930s.

Out of respect for his surviving family and their legal representatives, I will refrain from disclosing his name or official title.

Nevertheless, his complex history adds a layer of intrigue to our gathering, as we navigate the delicate political landscape that

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still echoes the past.
A representative of this gentleman reached out to Seine at our café in Berlin, requesting assistance in facilitating the relocation of his family, his considerable wealth, and numerous trucks filled with ancient artifacts that had been generously donated to him by the benevolent people of China.
This interpretation of events comes from his lawyer, not from my own perspective, especially

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considering that the lawyer himself met a tragic fate at the hands of the Communists. The situation was fraught with urgency and complexity, as it involved not only the logistics of moving valuable items across borders but also the safety and well-being of a family caught in a tumultuous political landscape. It's a mystery how he came to know Seine, but considering I've been acquainted with him since 1915, I still can't unravel the web

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of his connections.
Seine has spent a significant portion of his life cultivating relationships with a diverse array of influential figures, seemingly indifferent to political affiliations. This has earned him a unique standing; the Communists appreciated him, and the French had largely overlooked his actions during World War I. This leniency allowed us to engage in business ventures in French Indo-China, facilitated by

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a partnership between the Japanese and the local Vichy French authorities during the early years of the war.
Moreover, Seine maintained friendships within the newly reinstated administration in Hong Kong, which included many English officials.
In essence, Seine was exceptionally well-connected, navigating the complexities of international relations with remarkable ease.

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Our host, burdened by the weight of a significant bounty on his head and the need to safeguard his considerable fortune, found himself in a precarious situation as he sought safe passage.

The English authorities had extended an offer for him to traverse through Hong Kong, yet their demands were steep; they insisted on a hefty portion of his amassed treasures as a form of down payment, revealing their

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insatiable greed.
However, this proposition became irrelevant as the Communist forces had already severed access to Hong Kong, effectively controlling all routes between Shanghai and the bustling port city.
This blockade not only complicated his escape but also underscored the dire circumstances he faced in his quest for freedom and security.
Seine inquired why he hadn't

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simply chartered a boat for their venture.

After a brief moment of skepticism regarding Seine's capabilities, their benefactor chuckled and laid out the stark reality. He explained,

"If it were that straightforward, I wouldn't have needed to enlist your services.

The docks are under the tight grip of the Triad gangs, who have already struck a deal with the advancing Communists.

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Moreover, we can't overlook the presence of the US and British Navy, which are anchored just offshore, not to mention the myriad of freelance pirates that roam these coastal waters."

He concluded with a disgruntled remark that carried a hint of insult, emphasizing, *"That's precisely why you're here!"*

As I wandered through the streets of Shanghai, I found myself reflecting on the impact of the war years on this vibrant city.

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To my astonishment, the changes were minimal; the essence of Shanghai seemed to have endured despite the turmoil.
A new wave of expatriates had arrived, seemingly oblivious to the imminent threat posed by the Communist 3rd Army, which was just days away from breaching the fragile defenses of the Nationalist forces.
The Nationalists, who had repeatedly assured the community that they were

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successfully pushing back the Reds, were paradoxically busy gathering anything of value that could be salvaged.

Many were frantically seeking safe passage, their eyes set on the possibility of establishing a government in exile on the fortified island of Formosa. The juxtaposition of hope and desperation painted a complex picture of a city caught in the throes of uncertainty, where the past lingered in the air, and the

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past lingered in the air, and the future hung precariously in the balance.

The once-vibrant KitKat Lounge had seen better days, its charm somewhat faded despite the involvement of Japanese silent partners in the local administration during the war. The Englishman who had skillfully managed the establishment in its heyday was revealed to be one of those steadfast individuals who clung to the past, ultimately

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remaining until the very end of the tumultuous period. Unfortunately, his loyalty led him to a grim fate; he disappeared into one of the internment camps, leaving behind a legacy of memories and a lingering sense of loss, never to be seen again. The original KitKat girls had long since faded into memory, yet the allure of fame and fortune continued to attract a new generation of young women, eager to capture the attention of

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junior government officials or military personnel.
Observing this timeless cycle, I decided to supplement my income by creating sketches and portraits for the affluent patrons who still visited the lounge.
In addition to earning a little extra cash, I aimed to assist the new management by transforming these artistic pieces into promotional materials designed to draw in fresh clientele.

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This approach had proven remarkably effective during my time at our café in Berlin, shortly after the war, where I had successfully used my art to entice customers and breathe life into the establishment.

I hope you find the content of the book compelling enough to consider making a purchase, especially since my beloved landlady, who has a bit of a gangster flair, has reminded me that my rent is due next week.

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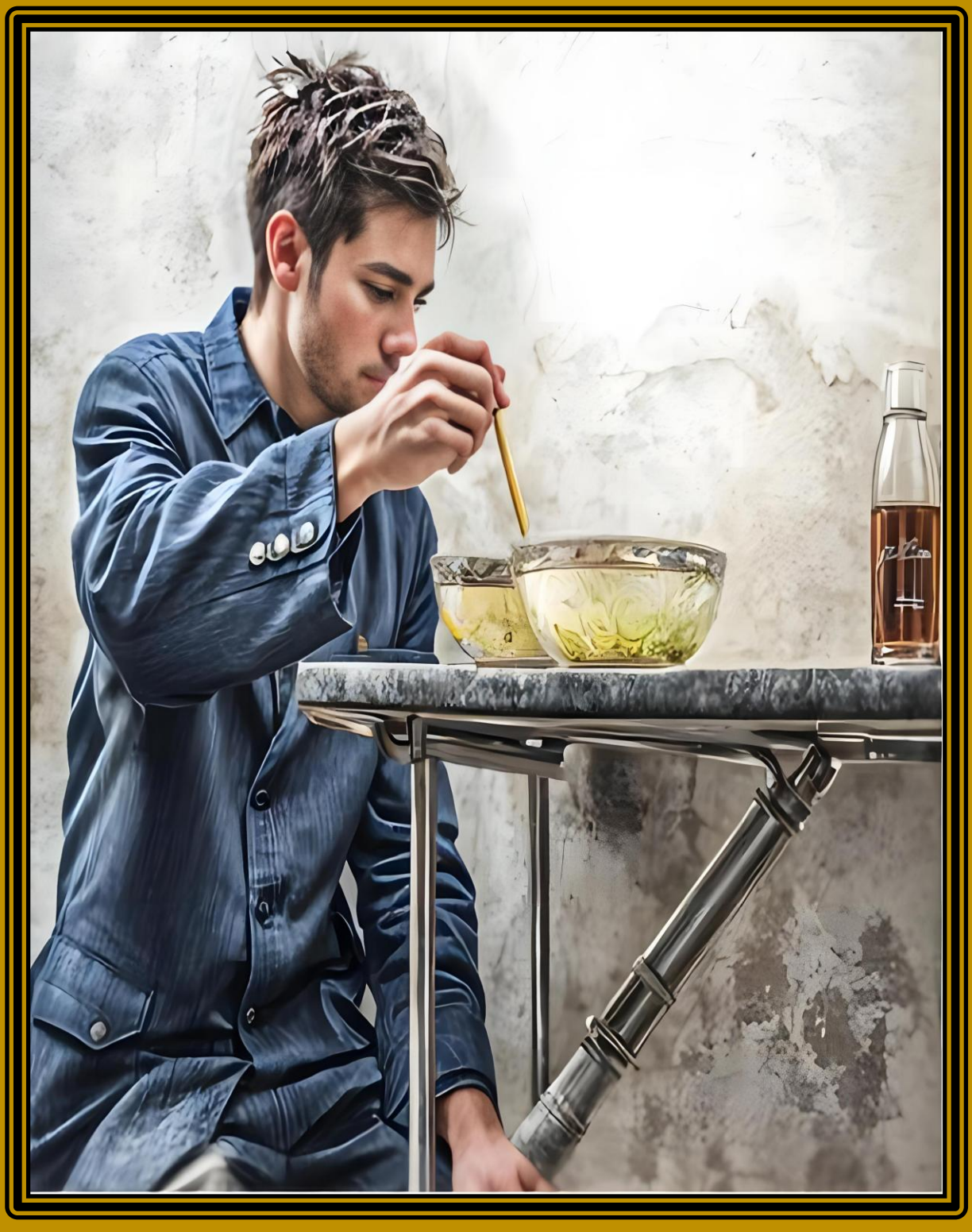
Her no-nonsense attitude and the urgency of the situation serve as a gentle nudge to encourage you to explore the pages of this book. It promises to offer insights and stories that could be both entertaining and thought-provoking, making it a worthwhile addition to your collection.

So, as I prepare to meet my financial obligations, I invite you to dive into this visual journey that might just captivate your interest.



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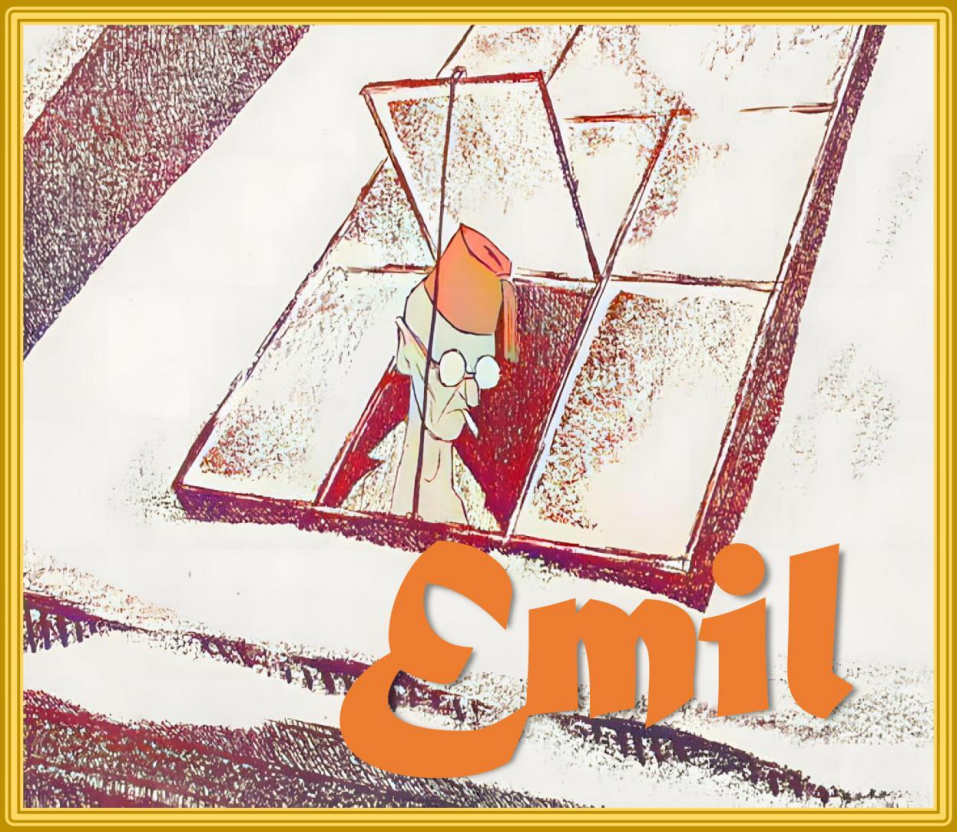
RETURNING TO A NORMAL LIFE
AMIDST THE CHAOS OF WAR

DANZIG - 1943



GIOVANNI METRO STOP GALLERY

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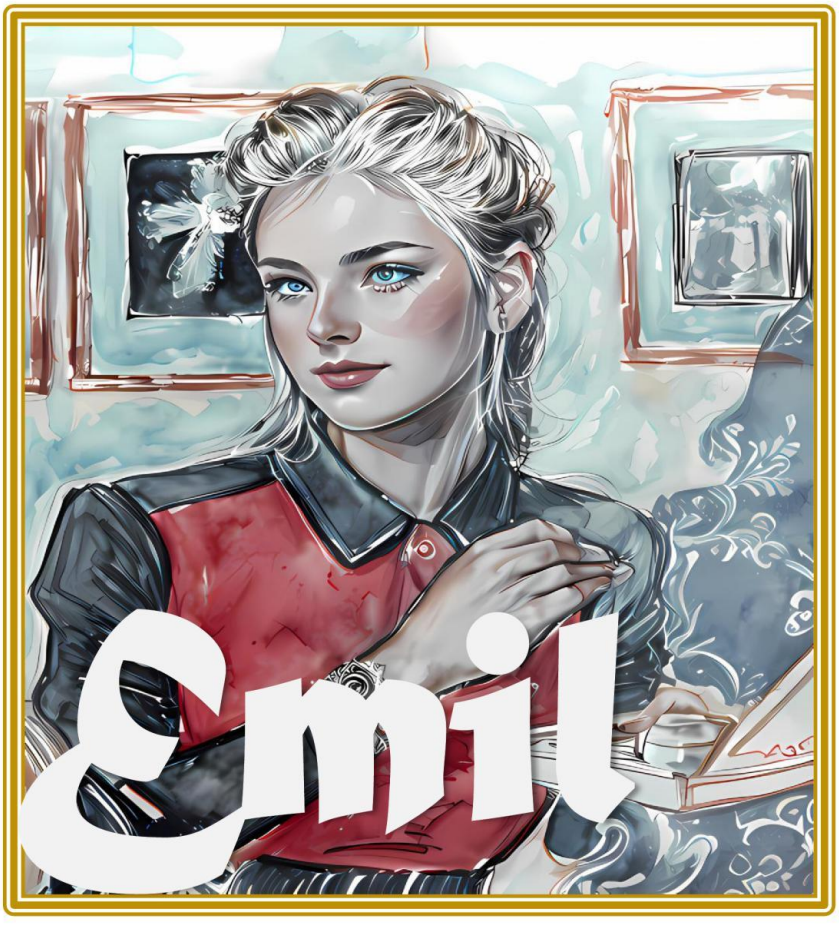
When You Are Unchanged From Time And Reality

STRANGE FACES COME OUT OF THE RAIN



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Out Amongst the Last Generation

The Day Before Godzilla Destroyed Tokyo

Giovanni Metro Stop Gallery

WWWG Productions Ltd. Singapore - 2025

KitKat Gentleman's Lounge

Zhongshan Road, International Settlement

Shanghai, Republic of China

Old Uncle Albert's

Snapshots from Atlantis

Giovanni Metro Stop Gallery

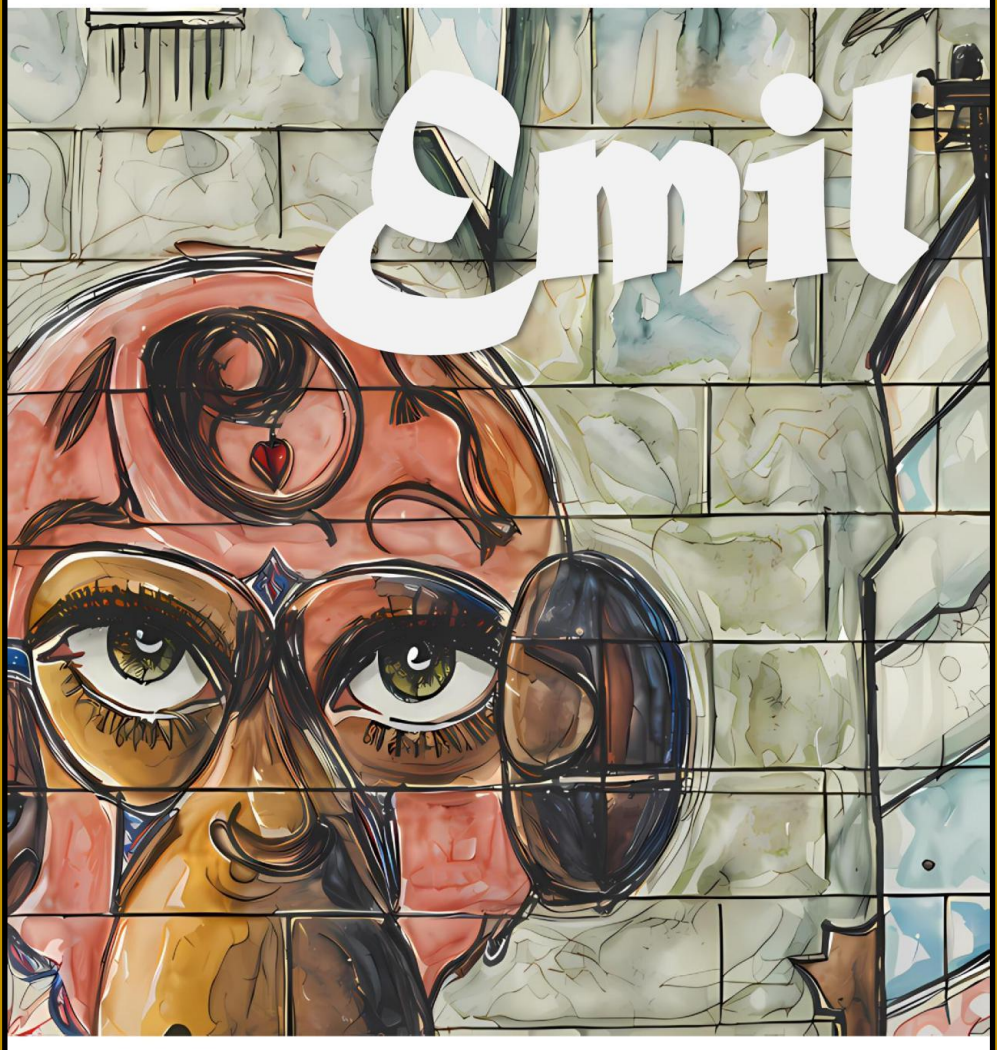
WWWG Productions Ltd. Singapore - 2025

Kitkat Gentleman's Lounge

Zhongshan Road, International Settlement

Shanghai, Republic of China

YOU HAD TO BE THERE



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